

Update to Holocaust Insurance Guidebook February 1, 2000

Holocaust Remembrance Day: An Important Outreach Opportunity

Jewish communities throughout the world will observe Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, on or around **May 2, 2000**. Many communities will sponsor local memorial services or educational events at this time. These events may provide a unique opportunity for state regulators, in cooperation with Jewish and Holocaust-related organizations, to inform the public about the Holocaust insurance claims process.

Tracing Holocaust-Era Insurance Policies: New Resources for Claimants

Renewed efforts to recover confiscated assets related to the Holocaust have led many survivors and other prospective claimants to independently search for records supporting their claims. Some families have personally attempted to locate files in government archives in Europe shedding light on the confiscation of relatives' assets by Nazi authorities and European insurers. These files are an important source of information confirming the existence of insurance policies, specific companies and the value of insurance assets.

The single most important tool to help Holocaust survivors and heirs locate an unpaid policy are lists of the **names of original policyholders** found in the files and archives of European insurers. Publication of these comprehensive lists will allow families who know that insurance coverage existed but until now lacked documentation to locate the names of loved ones, confirm the details of the policies and file a claim to collect what is rightfully theirs. Use of the internet will likely be the most important resource for such families.

The International Commission on Holocaust-Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) has undertaken to publish the names of Holocaust-era policyholders whose insurance has never been paid out to the rightful beneficiaries. Many of these names are found in the files of the European insurers. Additional names are located in public archives in Germany, Austria, and other European nations.

Even as the ICHEIC negotiates access to these lists and makes them available to the public, independent efforts have already resulted in the publication of the first extensive registries of individuals who held unclaimed assets.

Living heirs.com is an internet-based service providing a list of over 50,000 names of Jews living in Vienna in 1938 whom the Nazis forced to complete detailed property declarations. Persons identifying relatives on the list can acquire the contents of the confiscation files, which may contain details of insurance policies as well as other stolen assets. Livingheirs is currently working to assist claimants to access files in German and

Dutch archives, as well as expand the registry of names to include Holocaust victims from other countries.

The Office of the President of the Czech Republic has unearthed records of the Gestapo and Czech insurers during the years of Nazi occupation and published a list of 20,000 Holocaust victims whose property was confiscated by the occupation authorities. While details of insurance are not known from these records, the list may indicate to families the existence of a valid insurance claim. This list and related information is available at the following website: **http://www.hrad.cz/kpr/holocaust/index_uk.html**

State insurance regulators can assist local claimants by referring them to these new resources and conducting ongoing searches of ICHEIC and other policyholder lists to identify matches on behalf of their claimants.